

United States Senate

January 15, 2009

Senator John D. Rockefeller, IV
Chairman
Committee of Commerce, Science and Transportation
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Member
Committee of Commerce, Science and Transportation
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Susan M. Collins
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Rockefeller, Hutchison, Lieberman and Collins:

There is a growing effort underway urging Congress to extend the February 17, 2009, cutoff date for analog television signals, including a request made last week by John Podesta, Co-Chair of the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team. Having spent almost 15 years fighting to provide additional spectrum to first responders, I am writing to share my views on this important matter.

As you well know, when the analog television signals are cutoff, much of the spectrum will become available for the development of interoperable, emergency communications systems to assist our nation's local, state and federal first responders—a key recommendation in the 9/11 Commission's Final Report. While our first responders have been told year-after-year that this spectrum will be available, its availability has continued to be delayed largely due, in my view, to a well funded lobby of special interests.

I urge you to work with me to uphold Congress' important commitment to public safety and ensure that spectrum is made available to first responders on the date Congress promised – February 17, 2009. According to the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the International Association of Police Chiefs, all fifty states have already received licenses to operate on portions of this spectrum when it is made available and at least one public safety agency is seeking approval from the Federal Communications Commission to utilize this spectrum right now. We simply cannot risk the consequences of further delaying this critically needed spectrum for public safety.

While I agree with many others that an extension of this well publicized cutoff date may only serve to confuse consumers, I would not oppose a very short extension of less than 120 days, provided that public safety's ability to access this spectrum is not delayed and will be made available on February 17, 2009.

I hope you agree that it is time to put an end to the drawn out debate on an analog cutoff date and proceed forward with the introduction of digital over-the-air television and the ability to create a robust, modern, interoperable communications system for our Nation's bravest.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John McCain", with a stylized, cursive script.

John McCain
United States Senator